Bonanza Starts All-Turbine Operations

WHEN FLIGHT 65, a DC-3 five-stop Salt Lake-Phoenix schedule, terminated on Oct. 31, it marked the end of piston-engined operations for Bonanza Air Lines.

The next day the company claimed the title of the first all-turbine airline in North America, covering its 2,244 route miles with eight Fairchild F-27s. The switchover came only 20 months after BAL's first turboprop went into service.

For president and board chairman Edmund Converse it was the high point of 14 years of building the company from a charter operation that started in January 1946. Las Vegas-Reno scheduled service opened the following August with one DC-3, and the fleet eventually increased to 10—four obtained from United, two from TWA, and one each from American, Northwest, Continental and Western. In 14 years, the DC-3s hauled 954,353 passengers.

The F-27 has been a bonanza for Bonanza. Commercial revenue in a recent 12-month period was 63% ahead of 1958, when the first plane was introduced. The 176-mile average stage length on which the turboprop has been flown makes BAL the lowest cost F-27 operator. Now, with the switchover completed, BAL is set to capitalize fully on the economics of turbine power. ■

FAIRCHILD'S TWIN-TURBOPROP F-27 (below) takes over Bonanza's entire route operation only 20 months after its introduction.